



The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB 655 – CAPITAL PROJECTS – HIGH PERFORMANCE AND GREEN BUILDINGS –
ALTERATIONS
(THE GREEN BUILDING RESTORATION ACT)

In 2018, the General Assembly enacted the 21st Century School Facilities Act, the culmination of the so-called Knott Commission that studied and suggested comprehensive recommendations for our school construction program.

The new law added a section that directs the Maryland Green Building Council (MD GBC) to develop guidelines for new public school buildings that *“achieve the equivalent of the current version of the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED (Leadership In Energy and Environmental Design) green building rating system silver rating or comparable system or building code...without requiring an independent certification that the buildings have achieved the required standards.”*

In October 2019, the Department of General Services Secretary approved guidelines requiring only that the architect or engineer note in the construction documents that the project meets one of the paths. Also, the local school system *“may”* obtain a letter of opinion from an independent third party stating that the new school building was designed to satisfy the requirements of LEED, Green Globes, or the International Green Construction Code (IgCC).

The guidelines do not provide an accountability system to ensure that our schools will be high performing green schools. Even if a project team elects to obtain a letter of opinion, the term *“independent third party”* is not well defined and makes possible purchasing compliance from unqualified consultants.

Why is it important to have green schools? Whereas standard buildings waste and use tons of materials each year, green buildings minimize waste and use fewer resources. They save water and energy and reduce utility costs while also protecting the health of teachers and students. Green buildings minimize environmental impact, improve health and academic outcomes, are fiscally responsible, and encourage students to become literate about sustainability issues.

SB 655 would require once again that green schools be built with an independent certification to verify they have been built according to the required standards. It will also require that other capital projects, including schools, that are built with at least 50% of state funds are to be constructed using either LEED Silver, two Green Globes, or with the 2012 IgCC standards. If we are requiring the use of higher green standards to build schools, we should also hold capital projects that are being built with public funds to those high standards as well. I ask for your support of SB 655. Thank you.
